PLAYMATES, CLASSMATES, MATES

By Mrs. Paul E. King

From the June 26, 1983 Sunday School Beacon

Talk about adding insult to injury, that was David! I could hardly believe my ears when, in answer to my question, didn't he know me... remember me, even?.., he said in that soft, dripping-with-honey voice of his, "I'm sorry, but I guess I don't. Should I have?"

Should I have! That was the last straw, believe me. The very last straw. What ailed the young man? I wondered. Was he a victim of amnesia? Some other disease, contracted while on the mission field with his parents,
perhaps? But, no, I ruled these things out quickly; he was at college, wasn't he? Same as I. And were he a stupid somebody, a dunce, certainly he wouldn't be in college.

I walked away quickly. To say the least, I was embarrassed. David's face was a total blank as far as recognition when I told him my name. He immediately occupied the bottom of my priority list.

"I think you embarrassed him, Alicia," Kelly Sue said as we started across the campus for Wood Hall and our next class.

"Embarrassed him!" I exclaimed. "I wonder what you think he did to me! I'm positively mortified. Mortified! Imagine, him not remembering! We played together as children on the mission compound and were classmates in the mission school. I can't believe it, Kelly; I simply can't!"

"How many years ago was that, Alicia? Years do have a way of changing peoples' looks, you know. You, no doubt, were still in braids when David last saw you."

"I guess I hadn't given that any thought," I admitted quickly, adding, "but I recognized him. How do you explain this?"

Kelly Sue laughed her bubbly-light kind of laughter and said, "You're a genius, Alicia, that's all I can say. And are you positively, absolutely without-a-doubt sure that he is one and the same, David Grennen from that area in Brazil? There are many David's in the world, and Grennen's not an uncommon last name, you know."

"The inference being that this is indeed David Grennen but not the David Grennen of missionary days, right?" "Well, yes, of course," Kelly Sue admitted. I looked at my friend. Then I burst out laughing. "What a coincidence, that so many David Grennens should have a mole on the edge of their right ear. When I was quite small, I used to pick at that mole, until my mother made me stop it--told me it could create physical problems like cancer for him. No, Kelly Sue, I'm not wrong; that's David, my missionary playmate/classmate. I'd know that voice in the darkness of a black midnight--soft, kind, smooth, like the boy who owns it."

"You sound sort of 'struck' on the young man, Alicia."
"I was. You know, a childhood crush. We shared many happy hours together. And many a frightening experience, too, like the time the Catholic priest instigated a riot and the entire community, it seemed, converged on the mission station. Talk about scared! But God intervened in a miraculous way. I guess I'll never be able to call America 'home'; the mission field's my home. That's why I'm studying to be a teacher; I want to go back. Graduation can't come fast enough for me. And to think that David chose the same Bible school I did. What a coincidence."

Kelly Sue was silent for a while. Then she said, "What if it's providence, and not coincidence at all, that both of you have come here to get your training?"

"What do you mean, Kelly?"

"Well, I'm not in any position to know what God's will is for you, Alicia, but it could well be that God was in the choice of this Bible school for each of you . . . to lead you together for the future work of missions. I never cease to be amazed at His leadings. In fact, I find it utterly exciting and wonderful to follow where He leads."

"Isn't that the truth!" I exclaimed. "Since the day I died out completely to Alicia Louise Pickett and turned the reins of my life over to Him, I have had one glorious surprise after another. Oh, I've had my share of battles and trials, tests and temptations, too, but the victories so far outshine and surpass these things until I can do nothing but just weep for pure joy and shout His praises. It certainly does pay to serve Jesus. Well, here we are. I'll see you after class, the Lord willing."

Kelly Sue slipped through an open door into her classroom; I hurried down the long hallway toward mine. I hadn't gone far, however, when I became aware of the fact that I was being followed. Turning, I came face to face with you guess it, David.

"I'm sorry," he said apologetically, "if I offended you by my remark. I guess some of us don't have a memory like some do. Forgive me, please. I'd like to talk more with you. The cafeteria, at noon?" he asked, smiling down into my face, his blue eyes even bluer than I had remembered them.
"That'll be fine, David. We have a lot of 'catching up' to do after all these years," I said, trying to be as friendly as I knew how to be.

"Catching up? Well, okay. I'll be waiting at the front door for you."

He left me with a look of utter bewilderment on his face. I chuckled and hurried into class, wondering if he had no recall at all in his memory. I said as much to Kelly Sue while we walked together to our next class.

"I'm sure it'll all come back to him sooner or later, Alicia," she assured me. "Give the poor boy time. Like I said before, years bring change to each of us. And, truthfully, I can understand David's bafflement; you were rather small, no doubt, when you were last together. Now you're grown. Your hair, instead of being in braids or long curls, is beautifully arranged on your head in true womanliness. You're changed; so much so that David cannot recall or remember."

"You make sense," I conceded quickly. "only, why could I recall and remember? He's changed, too."

"True, but not nearly so drastically as you. His hair is no doubt still cut the same way as you remembered it having been. And then, you do have an advantage in that mole you claim he has, and which you saw."

We laughed together then, and when I told Kelly Sue about David wanting to talk to me over lunch, she was delighted and excited. "I hope he sets your mind at ease," she said.

"Well, I do, too," I said, sliding into my desk seat as she went to hers.

David was waiting for me, as he said he'd do, by the front door. I saw his tall frame long before I reached the cafeteria even. He smiled when he saw me approaching and hurrying to where I was, took my heavy books.

"I never could quite understand how such tiny, frail-looking creatures could carry such a heavy load of books without getting all tuckered out," he remarked smiling. "What are you working for, a music major?"

"Teaching," I answered quickly, giving him a quick sideways glance.
"That's great!" he exclaimed. "Any place in particular you hope to settle in? I mean, what city or town? After all, one usually has his sights on a specific area and there are so many beautiful places here in America. Where is your home?"

"In the Caribbean."

"The Caribbean!" he exclaimed suddenly. "You don't look . . . I mean, well, what do I mean?"

"That I look American, perhaps?" I teased. "That's exactly what I meant. You're a real mind reader," he said, laughing. "Frankly though, where is your home?"

"In the Caribbean. Honestly and truthfully, it is. My folks are missionaries there, and to me, 'home' is on the field, where my parents are."

We reached the serving line and David seemed unusually quiet and pensive. Was his "recall" beginning to work? I wondered, hoping it was.

"A missionary's kid, huh?" he said, half to himself and half to me, I thought.

"Like some others I know, David."

"You have me so confused and bewildered that I think I'll have to stop right here and learn the facts before I'll be able to eat;" he teased, adding, "I really am embarrassed that I can't place you, especially since you are from missionary parents."

"Perhaps, were I a little girl again trying to 'pick' the mole off your ear, you'd remember," I said mischievously.

A sudden smile broke over his face, a smile of recognition and remembrance. "You're Alicia Pickett!" he exclaimed joyously. "My little shadow and my trusted friend!"

It sounded almost benedictory, I thought.

"One and the same, David," I replied.
"This is almost too good to be true!" he said almost reverently. "I often wondered what became of you." Looking at me with something akin to awe, he said, "You... you've changed, Alicia. But I like your hair better this way; those beautiful long braids were always so tempting."

"Remember how I cried the time you caught them in your hands and played horse with me? I was the horse; you were the 'driver.' "

"I was an old meanie, wasn't I?" he said teasingly.

"That time, yes," I laughed. "Where are your folks stationed now?"

"Still in Brazil. Dad's busier than ever, trying to get new stations established. They had quite an outpouring of the Holy Ghost recently at several of the new preaching posts. I can hardly wait to get back."

"You, too?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I feel the same way. I guess we're at an advantage in a way; we see, first hand, the dire need of missionaries to these lands, and it comes natural-like, this call to service. If more people could see and feel what we've seen and felt, I doubt there'd be too much of a missionary shortage, David."

"You're right, little Alicia."

Little Alicia! He had actually called me his pet name for me--little Alicia. I felt almost like I was back in Brazil again.

We talked all through the noon meal; got together again the next day. And the next. One year went by. Two; and by the time David graduated and left for Brazil, we were engaged.

I graduated the following spring then flew out to meet him. His father performed the simple ceremony since my father was unable to leave the field where he and mother were laboring. And now, the man whom I once wondered if he had amnesia and I are truly "home." We've graduated, from
playmates/classmates to mates. Joined together by God and laborers together with Him, we are happy. Truly, the ways of God are past finding out.